



Kari Hathorn
Crook County District Attorney

260 NW 2nd Street, Suite 200, Prineville, OR 97754
(541) 447-4158 / (541) 447-6978 (Fax)
www.co.crook.or.us/dista

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Re: Testimony in Support of SB 95

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Kari Hathorn and I am the Crook County District Attorney. I am writing to offer support for SB 95, which would add an additional judicial position for the 22nd Judicial District.

Our three judges preside over all criminal and civil cases in both Crook and Jefferson Counties. Both of these counties have experienced rapid population growth as well as an increase in serious and complex cases. Our community continues to experience an increase in violent crimes, child abuse, and cases involving people experiencing mental health and drug addiction. Despite our three judges working full time, our dockets remain crowded. As a direct result of the crowded dockets, victims and defendants are not receiving adequate access to justice and often cases are delayed.

The 22nd Circuit Court Judges make every effort to give every case the attention the parties deserve. However, given the large number of cases on their dockets, there simply isn't enough time in the week to allow the judge adequate time to hear the parties. The judges are in the untenable position of rushing through cases to complete their dockets before the end of the business day. Unfortunately, this leads to inadequate access to justice for the victims and defendants who are allotted insufficient time for their cases to be heard. The Court packs the trial weeks with backlogged cases to process as many cases as possible. This routinely leads to jury trials that continue late into the evening and a large number of cases being set over the week of trial. It is not unusual to keep jurors in criminal trials until 8 pm or later because we simply don't have sufficient docketing time to handle all of the cases.

The 22nd Judicial District desperately needs an additional judicial position. Thank you for your consideration of the request. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this proposal or to take any steps necessary to help effectuate it.

Sincerely,

Kari Hathorn
District Attorney